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Establishing Copper Smelting in Australia

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On 28 January 1848 the sailing ship *Success* arrived in South Australia, having left Plymouth on 29 September 1847. Travelling as cabin passengers were Mauris Thomas, his two sons, Mauris, aged 17, and Charles 19, and his older brother, John, a blacksmith/smelter. Travelling as immigrants, as distinct from cabin passengers, was Mauris's younger brother, Nicholas who was accompanied by his wife Mary and their four children.¹

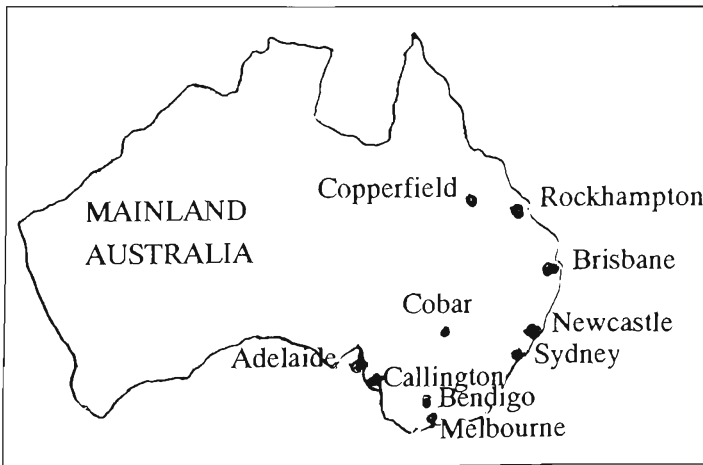
Mauris Thomas Senior and his brother John had spent some years as practical smelters in Chile and were also buying agents of copper ores for Messrs Williams of Swansea. His wife, Mary Ann Perkins, accompanied him to Chile where their two sons were born.

Within a fortnight of arriving in South Australia, Mauris and John Thomas were involved in discussions with the South Australia Company regarding the building and operation of a copper smelter at the Company's Kanmantoo Mine, Mount Barker. On 21 February, after a visit to the mine with the Thomases, William Giles, the South Australia Company's Australian manager, reported to the Board that the two men considered conditions at Mount Barker mines to be favourable for smelting. Describing them as "practical men who understand their business" and as "men of some property", Giles said the aim of the Thomases would be to erect suitable smelters in various localities where wood and copper ore were available rather than to establish one large central smelter to meet the needs of the colony. Their object, he said, was "a vital one to the interests of this colony", and he had confidence in their ability to attract the subscriptions necessary to form a company.²

The Bremer Smelting Company was established at Callington, and was carried on in Mauris's name, though he, far from being a man of property, had "little or no property", and the bulk, if not all, of the capital was supplied by his brother John.³ Mauris's sons were given to understand that they were partners. These were not the only Thomases involved in the business: Mauris's other brother, Nicholas, was employed as a 'servant' in the works.⁴

In March the Thomases began building a smelter on 15 acres of land on Section 5 of the Bremer, Hundred of Monarto,⁵ hoping to have it operating by May. The building was erected at their own expense, the cost, according to a later report in the *South Australian*, being £500.⁶ But Thomas also received credit from two sources -- from the South Australia Company in materials to £100, and from Elder⁷ for fire bricks. It was not until 19 July that the South Australia Company's ores began to be carted to the smelting house. By the end of August about 32 tons of ores had gone through the first of three operations, and the regulus reached 50 per cent metal. By mid-September, the Thomases had run the copper produced from the first 32 tons of the poor ore into bars, and Giles began negotiating terms with Mauris for the smelting of the 750 tons of ore remaining at the mine. Details of the final agreement for smelting 200 tons of copper ore from the Kanmantoo mines were contained in a letter from William Giles Senior to Mauris Thomas Senior tabled at a Board meeting on 23 September 1848. It provided that the ore be smelted within five months from 1 October, "unavoidable accidents excepted". The company was "to have a lien upon all the copper produced, 'viz' the proportion belonging to me for all advances in money at bank interest, and also for the materials supplied on my account."

In a letter to London Giles on 30 September 1848 explained what this meant for both parties. He said he believed that the building of



two or more furnaces would be justified, adding that some of the Thomases demands had to be met:

we must comply with his demand; he deserves every encouragement and when he gets his works into full operation he will be able to economise and reduce his charges...⁸

Nevertheless Giles admits that Thomas could have made little profit for himself so far because of the volume of wood he had to burn in attempting to raise the quality of the copper. Mauris now realised his value to the company as the first experienced copper smelter in Australia and began to dictate terms. Giles expressed his surprise at the new demands and added:

I cannot for a moment conceive how you can imagine that I can continue to supply you with ore for smelting upon the present terms, which most certainly will entail a serious loss to the mine. I never lead you to suppose that I was going to supply you ores UPON YOUR OWN TERMS, but invariably informed you that you would have to submit to competition.

Under this arrangement the company is mining for your advantage and yours exclusively.

If we are to have any future bargains, you must either reduce your proportion of the % or value the copper considerably less than the 70 pound a ton.

In spite of his harsh words Giles had little bargaining power and by May had begun negotiating with Thomas to smelt all the ore that was produced for the next 12 months on terms similar to those formerly proposed by the Patent Copper Company.⁹

The eventual agreement, signed on 30 June, was for two years,¹⁰ Mauris having 'decidedly rejected' the one-year term because he had "to incur a heavy expense for an engine". This agreement was apparently reached at the urging of Captain Renfrey since, in "a long and angry confrontation" over smelting terms, Thomas had threatened to abandon his works, and "it was to the interest of the mine to prevent his departure". On 29 June 1849, Mauris Thomas leased 15 acres of Lot 5 by the River Bremer from the South Australia Company for 21 years for a yearly rent of £5. Still in need of finance, however, he mortgaged it back to the company the following day to secure a loan of £300 at 10 per cent, to be repaid on 30 June 1850.¹¹ This land was selected because of its proximity to the copper lodes and the river. In the first half of that year, Giles had sent samples of the copper blocks to England, Batavia and Singapore to test the markets, though he expected that India would eventually prove to be the most profitable market. He was dismayed at the complaints from potential clients and told Thomas:

In my last letter from London, Mr McLaren remarks 'that the size of the blocks of your copper is most objectionable, they must be refined and for this operation it would be greatly preferred if they were one eighth of their present weight.'¹²

He added that all other buyers had raised the same objection, and asked Thomas when he would use the moulds which McLaren was sending out to the colony. Giles also offered ten tons of back-loading to help Thomas arrange transport of his materials.

By 14 November 1849 Giles could only advise that the moulds were daily expected as they are coming by the S.S. *Robert Henderson* which was to sail in July. He had little news from Thomas:

I have not heard that your works have commenced. Shall be glad to hear from you by return post as to your progress and when I may expect to get some copper and what quantity.

By 6 December Mauris had almost finished putting up a blast furnace, and had introduced an improved plan for refining his copper;¹³ and in February 1850 the South Australia Company was confident of receiving regular deliveries of copper. In an attempt to reduce costs, London had apparently suggested importing orphans or convicts. Giles dismissed the idea, stating that 'Orphans from Ireland were not acceptable to South Australia, similarly if Earl Grey tried to bring in convicts'.¹⁴

Relations between Mauris and the company went downhill rapidly. In one terse letter Giles warned him:

More converting of copper to money accusations. Please send us some copper. You had been used those small moulds.¹⁵

The moulds were a cause of continuing friction and it is not even clear that they were ever used. On 22 July 1850, Giles warned Mauris:

The moulds you somehow broke cost five pounds and sixpence each, and you will be debited for the number of moulds you have broken.

Within two years Mauris had left the colony and his sons took up the challenge. The discovery of gold in Victoria resulted in an exodus of the copper miners. Mauris joined the rush leaving several financial disputes outstanding. These were eventually referred to arbitrators, A.L. and James Elder, of Elder Smith. On 17 January 1852 they announced terms of settlement. They found that the South Australian Company was entitled to charge 10 per cent on all cash advances made to or on direction of Mr Thomas until repaid, and on all ores delivered to Thomas for smelting, commencing four months after the delivery of each parcel. Thomas, they found, was to be allowed credit on all copper delivery by him from the date of delivery at the work with interest due him to be at the rate of 10 per cent as charged by the company.

By 6 May, the Thomases had received all the ores to which they were entitled¹⁶, but had failed to deliver the copper produced on time as specified by the contract due, in large measure, to problems with the furnaces and the fact that his workers had left for the diggings. Mauris Junior and Charles, now aged 21 and 23 respectively, stayed behind to operate the smelter and complete their contract with South Australia Company before following their father and Uncle John to the gold field at Bendigo.

In April 1853 both sons returned to the smelting works where a “large pile of ore“ was awaiting smelting. They applied to the government for renewal of their special timber licence to cut timber from a block twenty miles square in the Hundred of Monarto. On 17 August 1853 the Colonial Secretary replied, refusing the request.

Between 1853 and 1857 the brothers built a sound business, as distinct from smelting copper. It was a mixed farm and flour milling business. Charles was appointed auditor of the Nairne Shire on 10 January 1854. He left for England at the end of 1855, leaving his wife behind. He had married the five-months pregnant Mary Ann Penhall, daughter of a mining captain. His daughter, Elizabeth, was born on 1 December 1855. His mother, Mary Ann, had died in Cornwall on 2 June that year. With his father’s power of attorney, Charles went to England to settle the family’s estate and bring out his father’s two young daughters. In December 1856 he returned to Callington, a



Ruins of Bremer Smelting Works in 1989, Callington township in background. Foreground brickwork presumably part of furnace. Depression behind marks beginning of a large slag heap.

township 75 kilometres south east of Adelaide which came into being when the South Australian Company began mining at Kanmantoo in 1846. Charles found the family feuding over money when both his father and uncle caught a dose of avarice followed closely by 'gold fever'.

THE INSOLVENCY ACTIONS

Put simply, Uncle Nicholas sued his brother, Mauris, for a large sum of money for non payment of wages at the smelting works and for his share of gold won at the diggings. When Mauris Senior did not appear at the Supreme Court of South Australia, Nicholas then took action against his sons. The outcome was the total loss of their assets, as in defending themselves they incurred court costs of 1400 pounds forcing them into insolvency. The sons attempted to sue their father, but could not get him to appear before the Supreme Court. He was now living in Victoria and extradition did not apply at that time. Nicholas did quite well from those proceedings. At the insolvency hearing in November 1858, he informed the court that he had in his possession "some of the property of the present insolvents, viz the Bremer Smelting Works, the lease of the smelter, cottages, wood, iron, and all the materials on the premises; some ore, also 61 cattle."¹⁷

After Nicholas's claim was settled, the brother's assets at the time of their insolvency included:

- a flour mill (on 3-4 acres of land) and a residence
- a steam engine, boiler and associated machinery to power the mill
- 60 acres of land (section 352 of the Hundred of Monarto), fully devoted to growing wheat.

At this final hearing, the Official Assignee pointed out that it appeared that the father alone was debtor to the uncle who had no claim on the sons but "By the omission of an exchange of documents, an award had been made in favour of the uncle against the insolvents". He added that they should have taken earlier steps to ascertain whether their creditors would consent to a private arrangement before petitioning the Court.

The Commissioner, however, saw the sons as partly responsible for their predicament and had they declared their insolvency earlier, could have saved the estate considerable expense. He therefore awarded them only a second-class certificate, "although no imputation of dishonesty would rest upon them".

Charles and Mauris remained at Callington for some years after their insolvency, and built and managed the Worthing Copper Mining Company's smelter there in 1859. This smelter, at the Bremer Mine, was only a stone's throw from the Thomases original Bremer Smelting Works at Callington. In the Australian Biographical of Index 1864

Charles is described as Superintendent Smelter, of Callington while Mauris declared himself a metallurgist on his marriage certificate. The brothers' skills were to take them a long way from Callington.

Mauris married Susannah Maria Bonnin at Glenelg on 4 October 1861. She was the step daughter of Alfred Atkinson, the solicitor who represented the brothers in their insolvency action. On 20 September 1863, a son, Frederick Mauris, was born, at Glenelg.¹⁸



Mauris Thomas and his bride to be, Susannah Maria Bonnin from a daguerreotype ca 1860. Mauris was then aged 29.

BURWOOD NEWCASTLE SMELTING COMPANY

Mauris Thomas arrived in Newcastle in 1864, on a two year contract to carry out a study into the feasibility of smelting at Minmi, near Wallsend in Newcastle. The promoter of this enterprise was George (later Sir George) Dibbs who was to be exposed as a trickster and a bankrupt. The scheme never came to fruition.

Shortly before beginning his association with the surgeon and entrepreneur Dr Mitchell whose son David endowed the Mitchell Library, Mauris wrote to the Wallaroo Company suggesting they smelt their copper ores at Newcastle. The secretary, William Main, replied on 11 January 1866 thanking him for his suggestion but advising that the directors were not prepared to negotiate such an extension to their smelting operations at that time. Charles had canvassed the Wallaroo Company for employment during 1865 and eventually secured the position that Mauris had proposed they create.

After the negative reply from Wallaroo, Mauris wrote to Dr James Mitchell offering to lease his smelting works, at Burwood, Redhead, Newcastle, without result. Mitchell's interest increased, however, when Mauris, visiting Sydney, called on him, and eventually offered him the position of manager with a new company, the Burwood Newcastle Smelting Company.

This company was formed on Mauris's recommendation.¹⁹ His salary was £300 per annum, plus sixpence per ton for copper smelted, and 3 per cent of the profits.²⁰ At this time, Mauris lives some three miles from Newcastle in a cottage of six or seven rooms with a garden and a 14-acre paddock.

The *Newcastle Chronicle* gave Thomas its unqualified approval. After an inspection of the works it reported:

All the old furnaces have been pulled down and new and superior ones erected in their place. Since Mr Thomas commenced smelting operations on the 3rd of [September 1866] he has had an ample supply of ore from the Currawang mines in the Bathurst area. After a time, if the enterprise pays as well as Mr Thomas firmly believes it will, the company intend getting their ore from the Adelaide market.²¹

Four months later it reported that brother Charles was on his way from Adelaide to manage the proposed Waratah Smelting Works.²²

In spite of his ten-year contract with the Burwood Newcastle Smelting Company, Mauris was to spend only three years there. Owing to the death of Mitchell and the family's challenge to his will, the company closed down in 1869.

After Mitchell's death, Mauris assayed for a Mr Wolfskehl, some ores from Mount Clara mine near Kilkivan, Queensland. It had a

contract with the Burwood Company. Walter Smith, the mine manger, wrote several letters to Mitchell's estate seeking settlement of a number of long outstanding accounts incurred in maintaining the mine which now belonged to the estate.

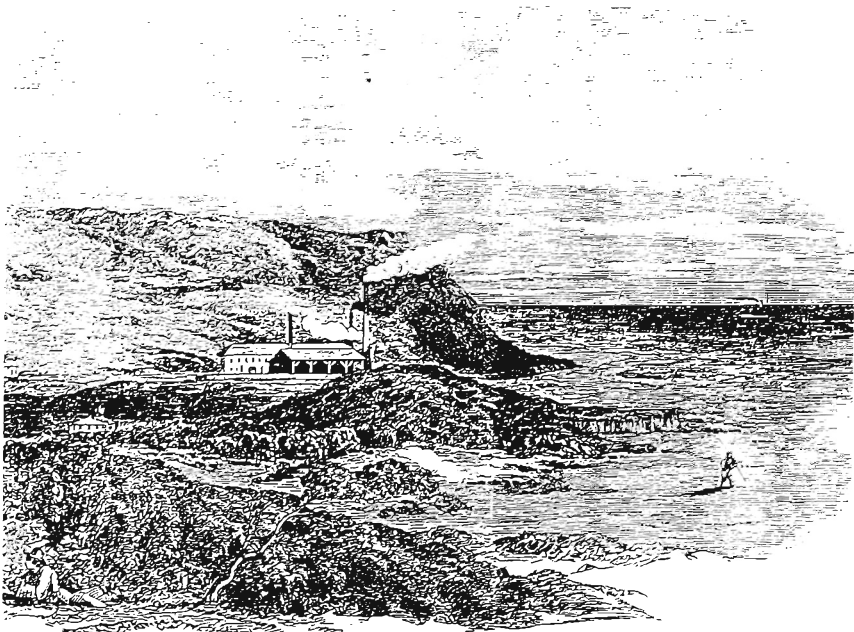
Smith was, apparently, a more than honest man. In his letter from Maryborough, dated 14 October to Norton and Baker, solicitors to the estate, he advised that the copper mine had been surveyed and marked off and that the plans had "gone in to the land office for to get the Deeds made out in the name of David Scott Mitchell"

Smith wrote to C.J. Stevens on 26 October:

Sir,

I received the 35 pounds and i hope to get the deeds made out in the name you Require. it cost me more than i Received in all 37 pound 18 shillings and 11 days time But i Suppose i must not Expect payment as the Court will not alow it all. i have to Say that you have got a most valueable mine it will be a fourtune for its owner. I see Mrs Mitchell has got the Case and the full management of her Estate i am glad of it for that Wolfshell was a Great rogue.

Smith's correspondence also includes two pages of overdue accounts for goods which he ordered on behalf of Sir James Mitchell, delivered by Henry Friend, Storekeeper of Victoria Wharf, Gladstone.



THE BURWOOD COPPER-SMELTING WORKS.

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PEAK DOWNS

Charles' career, meanwhile, was having some success. In February 1868 he had the honour of showing the Premier of New South Wales (Henry Parkes) over the works which were flourishing. Ships were arriving regularly with ore for smelting.²³ Charles managed this company with great success until he retired in 1889.

Mauris moved to Queensland early in 1870, having signed an agreement to manage the smelting operations of the Peak Downs Copper Mining Company, at Copperfield, 265 miles to the west of Rockhampton.²⁴

Copper ore was discovered at Peak Downs in 1862, and mining began in April 1863. Attempts to smelt the ore over the next year were unsuccessful until the correct refractory bricks were sent from South Australia along with experienced copper smelters. High-quality coal was available from Blair Athol, only 12 miles away, and there were plentiful supplies of suitable timber close to the mine. This was used for smelting for the life of the mine, with disastrous results to the environment. Smelting captains included Captain J.P. Christoe (arrived April 1867) and Captain Leyshon Jones who had established and managed smelters in South Australia for the Wallaroo Company, but stayed only a few months.

Remoteness was a serious problem in these early years. The railway did not reach Clermont until 1884. The copper ingots, meanwhile had to be transported by horsedrawn drays. On 28 February 1866 the directors signed an agreement with Henry Bridson of Sydney loaning him £500 (at 10 per cent interest) to purchase two horse teams (16 horses with drays, tackling and harnesses) to carry the company's 'copper ore, metals, minerals and other loadings' between the mines and Waverly or some other Broadsound port at a cartage rate of no more than 10 pounds per ton.

Unfortunately the task was too great for him. A large Sydney cartage company, Messrs Fox and Adair, later used bullock wagons to carry the refined copper to the port, bringing back machinery and other goods to the town and the mine. This business grew so large that they bought a grazing property near Copperfield to rest, breed and cater for their increasing herd of bullocks.

By 1870, when Mauris took over the management of the smelting operation, 'immense deposits' of ore had been opened up, and Mauris set out immediately to construct additional furnaces. It is not clear exactly when Mauris arrived at Peak Downs but from newspaper reports, it is probable that he began work in April 1870. Susannah Thomas arrived in Rockhampton on the S.S. *Balclutha* on 9 March, accompanied by their three children — Frederick Mauris, Edith

Bonnin and Ernest Atkinson, aged seven, five and two — and a servant.²⁵ The coach trip to Copperfield would have taken approximately eight days from there, over difficult roads, making their probable time of arrival in Peak Downs late March. No mention was made of Mauris, who may have travelled earlier. On 15 April 1871 the *Peak Downs Telegram* referred to Captain Mauris Thomas having produced 2490 tons of refined copper in his first year of smelting.

Mauris's achievement in producing this quantity is particularly remarkable given that in the first six months of 1870 production had reached only 408 tons. This low production was, to some extent, due to lack of feed and water in the summer months followed by continual winter rains.²⁶ By April Fox and Adair reportedly had 100 teams on the road to Broadsound, each averaging six trips a year and carrying 3½ tons each time. Fox and Adair also sent copper direct to Rockhampton by the wool teams, a ton of copper making a useful bed for the teams' clean wool.²⁷ The roads were in good order, grass and water were plentiful, and the condition of the animals was good, allowing some wagons to take between four and five tons of copper.²⁸ The backlog was soon cleared.

Life for the family, compared with Newcastle, must have been a culture shock.²⁹ 'Rough and ready men' poured into Copperfield and the local newspapers expressed "great concern over larrikinism and language more than coarse — illiterate people abound ... Drinkers are spending 10,000 pounds a year on liquor in Copperfield, and a few pounds can't be found to spend on the local cemetery, which is in a disgraceful condition..." At the same time, the paper retained its sense of humour: "Three politicians ... will address a public meeting tonight. They are promised a shower of rotten eggs."

As Mauris entered his second year at Copperfield, the Peak Downs Company had little cause for worry, despite some irritation though the poaching activities of Ebenezer Vickery's Mount Perry Copper Mine. Recruits from the south who reached Maryborough on the S.S. *Leichhardt* on 29 April 1871, were followed a week later by twenty experienced men from Peak Downs.³⁰ Mount Perry ore throughout this period was shipped to the smelter Mauris Thomas had built in Newcastle.

Shortage of labour at Peak Downs was a continual problem, and in December arrangements were made to import 100 Cornish miners from England. The company was entering the most successful period of its operation but for Mauris and Susannah it began with the death of their fourth child, Arthur Charles Thomas.³¹ For Susannah it must have been particularly traumatic, with three small children and a husband who would have been far too busy to give her much support. The mine's operations were extending rapidly, and new

machinery and other supplies were arriving in such quantities that the company chartered the steamship *Balclutha* to provide a regular service, carrying the company's cargo direct from Sydney to Broadsound. To meet the demand, the carriers, Fox and Adair, bought Lotus Creek Station, together with 1000 head of cattle, to ensure a ready supply of fresh bullocks and fresh meat for their employees.³²

THE MOVE TO COBAR

In spite of his obvious success in managing the Peak Downs Smelter, Mauris began in October 1872 to seek professional opportunities elsewhere. The company had declared an extravagant dividend in August.³³ A fall in metal prices before the copper was sold left the company saddled with a lasting debt and in February 1873 no dividend for shareholders was declared.³⁴

Susannah was in poor health after the loss of her baby. On 26 October 1872 Mauris applied to Sir James Martin, who had acted for the Mitchell family in the Great Will Case (and who questioned Mauris in depth), for a position which involved building and managing a smelter at the Bowenfels Copper Mine, N.S.W. in which Sir James had an interest.³⁵ His application was prompted by a telegram from Sir James, but whether Mauris had made previous contact with him is unknown.

In his application, Mauris, referring to his 24 years practical knowledge of copper smelting, refining, assaying, and construction of works, commented:

There is no person to whom I could refer you in Sydney who could speak to my ability, etc, etc, except my own directors, and that I wouldn't like to do as I have reason to know that they would dislike me leaving my present position in their service.³⁶

By this time, his salary had been increased to £700, more than the £600 being paid to Charles, manager of the Hunter River Copper Works, Port Waratah, and he cited the poor health of his wife and the conditions for a young family as the reason for seeking to move.

Mauris was not successful and in the meantime was elected chairman of the Peak Downs Mutual Co-operative Society, the prospectus of which was issued in December 1872.

In February 1873 Mauris made another attempt to join the Wallaroo Company of South Australia, without success.³⁷ He had to wait another year, and it must have been with some relief that he boarded the *Balclutha* in Rockhampton March 1874 en route to Sydney, almost certainly for a job interview with the owners of the Great Cobar Mine. He returned to Rockhampton on the *Governor Blackall* about six weeks later taking a further fortnight for the coach trip back to Copperfield.³⁸

Mauris secured a contract with the Great Cobar Mine and, after giving the required three months notice, he was preparing to leave Copperfield. On 23 July he received 255 pounds for his 442 Co-op Society Shares. It was well timed as the Co-operative store was wound up at the end of the year. Mauris left Copperfield on a high note: production was up, and a new five-foot-thick black ore lode had just been discovered and his ability was praised in the local newspaper.³⁹

The Peak Downs Copper Mining Company continued to operate for only three more years. Problems beginning almost immediately after his departure. No dividend was declared in August. Lack of fuel was the main problem, as the operations required 140 tons of timber being consumed each day.⁴⁰ As a result, only three of the mine's eight furnaces could be kept operating and ore was stockpiled. In the midst of this crisis, the newspaper reported that: "The mining captain has upset the smelting captain, and the smelting captain has now upset the timber getters and firewood carriers."⁴¹ It was hardly an auspicious beginning but these problems no longer concerned Mauris.

The first manager of the Cobar Copper Mining Company, Captain Thomas Lean arrived by paddle steamer at Louth in November 1871. Adjacent to its lease was that of the South Cobar Copper Mining Company, managed by Captain John Goldsworthy, the two mines having common directors. They were merged into the Great Cobar Copper Mine not long after Mauris Thomas arrived in Cobar. Lean was a man of great mining experience.⁴² Lean and Thomas would, most certainly, have had commercial dealings with each other when they lived and worked at Callington, South Australia.

Early in September 1873, the Oriental Bank of Sydney wrote to the Wallaroo Company asking them to build a smelter at Cobar. This they refused.⁴³

According to Clelland⁴⁴ "the arrival of Captain Thomas, led to the departure of Captain Thomas Lean". He also stated that Lean had had difficulties with the directors. When he left, Thomas was appointed the Mine and Smelting Captain.

Mauris, as the new manager of South Cobar, found his predecessor, Davis, had erected a smelting shed at great expense:

on a wrong site, but is twenty feet too short, ten feet too narrow, and too low.⁴⁵

Thomas supervised the construction, in total, of six reverberatory furnaces (two in 1875 and the remainder the following year).

A year after his arrival, Thomas had a strike on his hands.⁴⁶ The smelters drew the fires but after three weeks they capitulated and were re-engaged upon the manager's terms, and the works were again in full operation.

Copper ore was carted by horse and bullock teams to Bourke, on the Darling River. If no steamer was available it was dumped on the river bank, eventually to be carried down the Darling and the Murray to Lake Alexandria. At Goolwa at the western end of the lake it was loaded onto horse trams and dragged to Port Elliot, transferred to a ship and taken, via the Backstairs Passage, to Port Adelaide.

In 1876 alone the company treated 1500 tons of ore at an average grade of some 12 per cent whereas the two mines had previously raised a mere 3000 tons of copper ore since the start of mining.

Before smelting started at Cobar, the combined cost of carting the ore from Cobar to South Australia was £12 per ton. Firewood cost six shillings a ton and as much again to cart. By 1881 the local scrub forests were cut so heavily, that a narrow gauge tramway, 15 miles long, was built to transport firewood to the smelter.

Thomas would not submit to interference by the directors. This led to his retiring from what had become known as The Great Cobar Mine in 1877.⁴⁷ During their time in Cobar, Susannah gave birth to three children — Ethel Mildred in 1875, Bertha Lilian in 1876 and Nellie who died soon after birth in 1877.⁴⁸ The Thomases may not have been unhappy to leave Cobar for, as the press reported:

The directors of the Great Cobar Copper Mine seem disposed to give their property a really good trial with the hope of obtaining dividends for their shareholders, and with this view have dismissed the late mining manager and men, and obtained another manager and another gang of miners. May these prove more successful than did their predecessors is a fervent hope of many who hold Cobar scrip.⁴⁹

It was an ignominious exit, not even accorded his name in this news report. Captain James Tozer Dunstan was the next manager in charge. Aged 49 when he arrived at Cobar, still a single man, he married Ellen Gordon five years later and retired in 1885 to become a publican at Charters Towers. He died, apparently, from being too convivial a host.

Mauris had obviously been preparing for his move to the healthier location of Molong, for only a month later we read:

Another mile on from Mr Shield's property leaves me at Mr Thomas's selection of 640 acres, with pre-lease. There the first thing that strikes one's notice is a fine dam thrown across the creek, so that a good water supply is retained in all seasons. Mr Thomas has some nice paddocks under wheat, and like Mr Shields, combines agricultural with pastoral pursuits, sheep being the stock, with a few cows for the use of the house. A nice wooden building, highly finished with all the necessary out-offices to a comfortable home, is to be seen here. The name of this property was 'Morialta' (Aboriginal for Waterfall), and the Mandagery Creek forms the eastern boundary.⁵⁰

‘Morialta’ was sold to William John Carrol, grazier of Orange, in 1885 for £1050. It is still owned by the Carrol family who now own a number of adjacent properties. The farm is now known as ‘Redbank’.

During a visit to Molong in July 1991, Frederick Thomas Ellis, was shown a diary that once belonged to a young lady named Charlotte Draper, a friend of the Thomases when they lived on ‘Morialta’. Eight pages relate to the Thomas family.

Diary entries by Thomas’s daughter Edith Bonnin in 1884, then aged 19 or 20, demonstrate a strong moral upbringing:

Q. What is your idea of happiness?

A. *Love and contentment.*

Q. What do you most wish for?

A. *Patience courage and success.*

Q. What is your favorite trait in a man’s character?

A. *Honor and moral courage.*

Q. What is your favorite dance?

A. *Being the daughter of Wesleyans, of course, I do not approve of such frivolities!*

After selling ‘Morialta’, Mauris took the family to Cudal where he owned a general store. He died there, aged 58, on 23 December 1889. His occupation was recorded as storekeeper, a mundane occupation after what he had been through. Susannah’s epitaph on the Cudal headstone was apt:

*Light after darkness, gain after loss
Strength after weakness, crown after cross
Sweet after bitter, hope after fears
Home after wandering, praise after tears.*

Mauris had built five smelting works, a truly great pioneering effort in establishing copper mining as a productive Australian industry.

ENDNOTES

1. *South Australian Register* (hereinafter SAR) 29 January 1848.
2. Death certificates of Charles and Mauris Jr.
3. Letter No.432 in the Board of Advice letter book 26 February 1848.
4. Supreme Court South Australia, hearing on 15 February 1858, evidence by Charles Thomas. Mauris’s sons were given to understand that they were partners.
5. see Memorial 96, 26 June 1849.
6. SAR 19 September 1848.
7. Letter No.456, Board of Advice letter book, 23 September 1848, p.506.
8. Letter, Board of Advice Book 30 September 1848, p.377.
9. Board of Advice letter book, 29 May 1849, page 395.
10. *ibid* 2 July 1849 p.470.
11. Memorials 96 & 95.
12. South Australian Company’s letter book 1849, page 501.

13. Evidence by Charles Thomas, Supreme Court, 15 February 1858.
14. South Australian Company's letter book, 6 December 1849, p.518.
15. *ibid* 5 February 1850 p.522.
16. *ibid* 22 December 1849.
17. Mauris and Charles Thomas in evidence, Supreme Court, 26 November 1858.
18. Evidence of Nicholas Thomas, 26 November 1858 when questioned by the Official Assignee, Supreme Court 26 November 1858.
19. The author's grandfather.
20. Mauris in evidence, reported *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 May 1869.
21. *Newcastle Chronicle* (hereinafter NC) 29 September 1866.
22. Mauris, in evidence at the Great will Case, valued his own services as worth 650 pounds per annum.
23. NC 29 September 1866.
24. NC 23 March 1867.
25. *Rockhampton Bulletin* 10 March 1870.
26. *Peak Downs Telegram* (hereafter PDT) 27 August 1870.
27. PDT, 15 April 1871.
28. *ibid*.
29. PDT 28 January, 10 June 1871.
30. PDT 3 June 1871.
31. Queensland Registry of Deaths, Country Index 83-72.
32. Mervyn Royle, *Perry's Past*; PDT 13 January 1872.
33. PDT 6 September 1873.
34. *The History of Peak Downs Copper Mining Company*.
35. Norton Papers. Other companies in which Sir James had major shareholdings included the Bathurst Copper Mining Company at Cow Flat, the Queen Tin Mining Company at Inverell, New Eureka Gold Mining Co. at Avisford and the Pymont Bridge Co. Martin Papers, A5328-8.
36. Letter Mauris Thomas at Peak Downs to James Martin 26 October 1872.
37. Wallaroo Company's minutes 3 March 1873.
38. *Rockhampton Bulletin* 14 March, 24 April 1874; PDT 2 May 1874.
39. PDT 4 July 1874.
40. PDT 29 August 1874.
41. PDT 29 August 1874.
42. Wallaroo Company's Minute Book 7 September 1873; Clelland, *The Founding Fathers of Cobar*.
43. Wallaroo Company's minute.
44. *Town and Country Journal* 10 October 1874 p.595.
45. *Town and Country Journal* 10 September 1874.
46. Number in register, Ethel, 75/08331; Bertha 76/08932.
47. *Town and Country Journal* 16 June 1877 reported by the Central Australian Paper.
48. *Town and Country Journal* 21 July 1877, report from Molong.
49. *Town and Country Journal* 16 June 1877.
50. *Town and Country Journal* 28 August 1875.